



# Preserving New Caledonia's Marine Environment

The benefits of a large and highly protected marine reserve

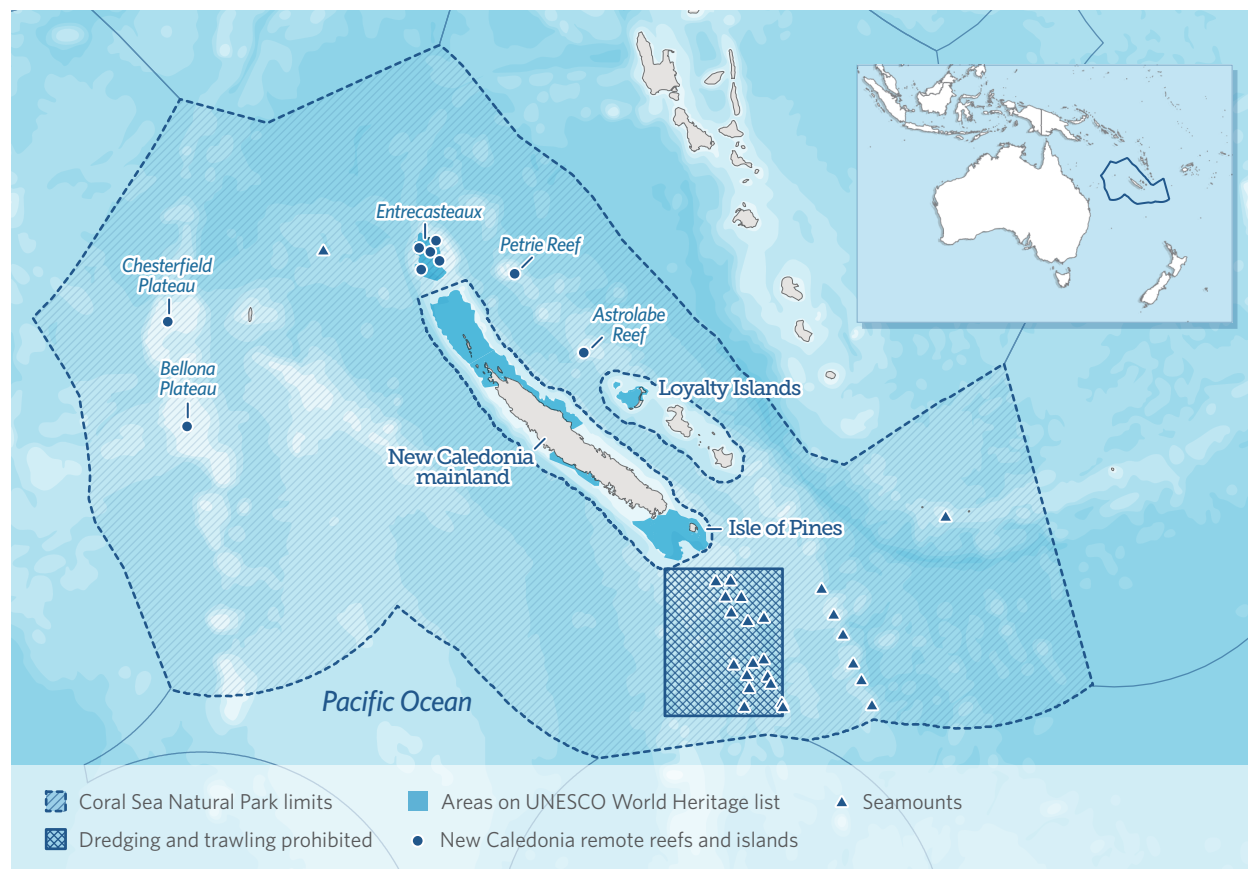
## Overview

The ocean plays a vital role in sustaining life on Earth. It covers almost 75 percent of the globe and contains nearly a quarter of the world's known species—with many yet to be discovered. These waters sustain billions of people and myriad wildlife.

But today, the ocean faces many threats, including industrial fishing, plastic waste, climate change, overfishing, and illegal fishing. Globally, almost 90 percent of fish stocks are fully exploited or overexploited, and about 1 in 5 fish is caught illegally. In the Pacific Ocean, bigeye tuna populations have been decimated. These trends must be reversed in order to protect marine biodiversity in these waters and to continue to sustain those who depend on them.

A few healthy marine environments remain. They benefit from a great diversity of marine life that warrants conservation. The establishment of large and highly protected marine reserves would safeguard these sites and ensure their protection for the long term.

# New Caledonia Coral Sea Natural Park and Exclusive Economic Zone



© 2016 The Pew Charitable Trusts

New Caledonia, a French territory in the South Pacific, is among these still intact sites. The surrounding waters are known for their natural beauty, great biodiversity, and unique ecological processes. They possess healthy marine life with many species of fish and corals, a reef system that is among the world's most extensive, and one of the largest lagoons on the planet. These waters are home to pristine ecosystems and significant populations of large predators. They also provide habitat for many iconic and threatened species.

In April 2014, New Caledonia's government showed its commitment to protecting its marine resources by designating the Natural Park, which covers the territory's entire exclusive economic zone (EEZ). At nearly 1.3 million square kilometers (501,930 square miles), the park could secure the long-term protection of the region's marine habitats. To make that happen, the government is now working on a management plan to define the zones of the park, how they would be used, and the different levels of protection.

Global Ocean Legacy, a project of The Pew Charitable Trusts and partners, has been invited by New Caledonia to join the management committee planning the Coral Sea Natural Park. Other members include representatives from government, local institutions, environmental organizations, local communities, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector.

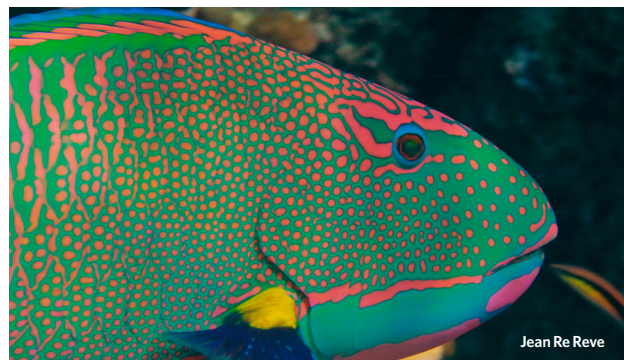
## The benefits of creating a large reserve

The waters of New Caledonia are healthy today because of restrictions on international fishing fleets and destructive trawling techniques. But with growing pressures from commercial and industrial fishing, the future health of the marine environment is not guaranteed. Creating large and highly protected marine reserves would ensure that these waters would be safeguarded for future generations.

According to scientists, marine protected areas help further ocean preservation by conserving habitats and enabling completion of species' entire life cycles, which also aids highly mobile or migratory species such as tuna, whales, turtles, and sharks. In addition, these large reserves create opportunities for environmentally conscious economic activities rather than those that are excessively extractive, such as industrial overfishing.

In New Caledonia, the reefs also have economic, social, and cultural importance. Of the lagoons and coral reefs, six have been designated UNESCO World Heritage sites, attesting to their universal value.

For these reasons, Pew has recommended that at least one vast, highly protected marine reserve be included in the Coral Sea Natural Park. Within that area, fishing and other extractive activities would be prohibited. This level of protection would foster healthy marine ecosystems and help preserve the waters of New Caledonia for generations to come.





## A large-scale marine legacy

Instituting a large and highly protected marine reserve in New Caledonia's EEZ would also result in the chance to connect the Coral Sea Natural Park to the already declared Australian Coral Sea Marine Park. Together, they would provide contiguous protection of an immense geographic area and would connect World Heritage sites in both EEZs. Linking these two parks would form the first transboundary protected marine area in the world, demonstrating a regional commitment to management of these waters and protection of the marine environment across the Pacific.

The Coral Sea Natural Park would significantly contribute to France's goal of protecting 20 percent of national waters by 2020. Extractive industrial and commercial activities would be banned in half of New Caledonia's protected waters.

A large and highly protected marine reserve also would help meet what is known as the United Nations Aichi Biodiversity Target 11, which calls for 10 percent of the world's marine and coastal areas to be protected by 2020. The Coral Sea Natural Park would make New Caledonia a global leader in ocean conservation. Today, some 15 percent of land areas are protected worldwide, while only about 2 percent of the ocean is similarly preserved.





## Facts: New Caledonia's marine environment



Liz Fraser

### Pristine islands and reefs

Chesterfield, Bellona, Astrolabe, Petrie, and Entrecasteaux are among New Caledonia's isolated reefs and islands. Considered among the last unspoiled sites on the planet, they are part of the territory's ocean legacy. Scientists have shown that the pristine reefs of New Caledonia have a much greater biomass of fish and density of sharks than do 63 other sites in 17 Pacific Islands.

### Marine species

Some 9,300 species have been identified in New Caledonia's waters. They include 1,700 species of fish, 48 species of sharks, 27 species of marine mammals, 32 species of marine birds, and four species of turtles.<sup>1</sup>



Christian Grondin

### Iconic species

Many iconic and threatened species can be found in New Caledonia's waters. These include humpback whales, dugongs, large sharks, sea turtles, manta rays, Napoleon wrasse, sea snakes, and seabirds. These species depend on healthy habitats for feeding, nesting, reproducing, and migrating.



### Deep ecosystems

Scientific studies have highlighted the exceptional nature of New Caledonia's deep ecosystems. They have revealed high levels of biodiversity, previously unknown species, and species from ancient groups, such as the endemic nautilus and the living fossil crinoid, *Gymnocrinus richeri*, that had been thought to be extinct 140 million years ago. The deep reefs and seamounts provide rich and productive habitats for some species found nowhere else.



### 700,000 pairs of nesting seabirds

New Caledonia is home to an incredible variety of seabirds, including frigates, puffins, petrels, terns, and various species of booby birds. About 700,000 pairs nest on remote islands as part of an estimated 2.5 million birds found across the territory. These islands are internationally recognized as important bird areas.<sup>2</sup> Their abundance indicates the productivity of the marine environment and its good health.

### Unique coral reefs

New Caledonia has the world's second-largest barrier reef and a remarkable diversity of coral reefs. More than 400 coral species have been identified to date. About 1,600 kilometers (1,000 miles) in total length, this unique reef system completely surrounds the main island and includes a double barrier reef in certain locations.





## About Global Ocean Legacy

Global Ocean Legacy (GOL) is a partnership of philanthropic leaders who share a vision: to protect the world's ocean for future generations by creating 15 great parks in the sea—all at least 200,000 square kilometers (75,000 square miles) in area—by 2022.

A project of The Pew Charitable Trusts, an independent nonprofit organization, and its partners, GOL is working with local communities, governments, and scientists around the world to identify the planet's remaining healthy ocean ecosystems. It advocates for conserving these waters with large and highly protected marine reserves. In addition, GOL invests in educational and cultural efforts to promote understanding of the need for these steps to preserve the great biodiversity of Earth's ocean.

In the South Pacific, GOL teams have worked in Australia; New Zealand; the Pitcairn Islands, a territory of the United Kingdom; French Polynesia, a territory of France; Easter Island (Rapa Nui), a part of Chile; and Palau.

Together, we are establishing the world's first generation of great marine parks by securing the designation of large, fully protected reserves. To date, our efforts have helped to double the amount of safeguarded ocean habitat worldwide.

## Endnotes

- 1 C. Payri, B. Richer de Forges, and F. Colin, *Compendium of Marine Species From New Caledonia*, Institute of Research for Development (2007). <http://nouvelle-caledonie.ird.fr/science-en-partage/editions/documents-scientifiques-et-techniques2/compendium-of-marine-species-from-new-caledonia-second-edition>.
- 2 BirdLife International, "Endemic Bird Area Factsheet: New Caledonia" (2015). <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/ebafactsheet.php?id=201>.

---

**For further information, please visit:**  
[pewtrusts.org/new-caledonia](http://pewtrusts.org/new-caledonia)

---

**Contact:** Christophe Chevillon, director, Global Ocean Legacy – New Caledonia  
**Email:** [cchevillon@pewtrusts.org](mailto:cchevillon@pewtrusts.org)  
**Website:** [pewtrusts.org/new-caledonia](http://pewtrusts.org/new-caledonia)

---

**The Pew Charitable Trusts** is driven by the power of knowledge to solve today's most challenging problems. Pew applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public, and invigorate civic life.